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7 Robotics Startups to Watch Right Now

AI is driving a boom in robotics startups. Leading venture capitalists and robotics experts identify the businesses that consumers, competitors, and investors need to track.

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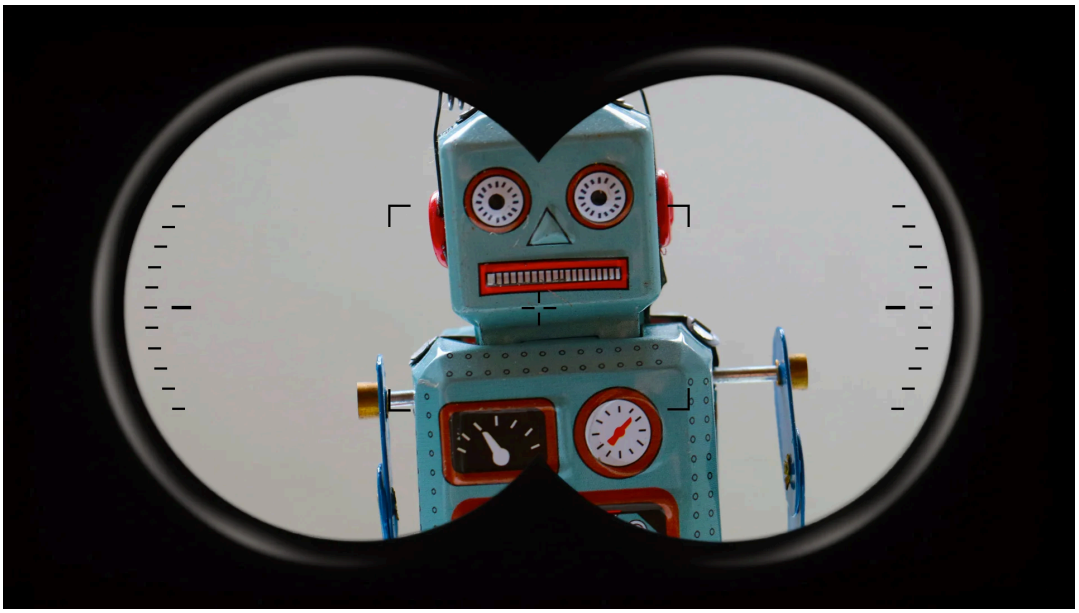

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A humanoid robot wins a half-marathon in record-breaking time. A lightweight throwable robot with flippers transmits images from dangerous areas. A 20-legged robot that moves equally well in any direction debuts. In many forms and for many reasons, robots are having a moment. Or maybe it's more accurate to say, billion dollar moments.

In just one month this past April, startups in this sector raised $5.3 billion, according to Crunchbase. And the industry was already full of unicorns, among them high-profile companies like Figure, Physical Intelligence, and Field AI. "A lot of investment is going into it so we can eventually get some ROI, or overall societal benefits" says Will Fung, a principal at Woven Capital, Toyota's growth-stage venture capital fund. This reflects the enormous research and

development costs required to marry machinery and digital intelligence into a sellable product. Still, it's an eye-widening amount of investment, he says: "Things are getting a little frothy."

Some of that froth could be caused by the wide range of projections for physical AI, the broad category that includes robotics, autonomous vehicles and drones. In a recent report, BCG highlighted projections that as many as six million humanoids on the market in less than four years. That shift would "fundamentally redefine how we live and work." But if the forecasts fizzle? "One of the largest misallocations of industrial capital in recent years," it writes.

That's quite a spread of possible outcomes for founders, to say nothing of investors sizing up their tech and business plans. So what are the signs that a company in this sector will take off? And which growth stage companies seem to be on the right trajectory? Here are the U.S.-based robotics startups we have our eyes on in 2026.

Robot manufacturing

While the robotics sector is growing fast in the U.S., few robot developers can do without off-shore components, according to a Morgan Stanley analysis. Robots for America, a new industry coalition that debuted in May, has the goal of "achieving American robotics supremacy."

Even parity would be an accomplishment, considering that China installs more than half of the world's industrial robots, according to Stanford research. "It's a critical strategic existential problem for us,"

says Dave Mawhinney, who was the founding executive director of the Swartz Center for Entrepreneurship at Carnegie Mellon University, and is currently a professor.

And it's got the attention of Congress. In both chambers, bipartisan coalitions introduced several pieces of robotics legislation. One bill would establish a robotics advisory commission, while another with the not-so-subtle name "Guarding the U.S. Against Adversarial Robotics Dominance" took specific aim at China. Some growing companies are already there.

1. Standard Bots

Standard Bots is a 200-employee company that leans hard on its American bonafides. Founded by Evan Beard, David Golden, and James Cordle in Glen Cove, New York, its stars-and-stripes heavy website emphasizes its U.S. based customer support, and its domestic design and manufacturing operations. This is no doubt a selling point to customers like the U.S. Army and Lockheed Martin.

By 2027, the company aims to manufacture its robotic arms and humanoids entirely onshore. (It will still need to source raw materials globally, however.) In June 2026, it hit a $1 billion valuation after a $200 million Series C funding round led by RoboStrategy, a NASDAQ-traded fund that invests in private robotics companies.

2. Westmag

In South San Francisco, fresh out of stealth as of this month, Westmag—short for Western Magnetics Company—designs and

manufactures drone motors and robot actuators. It says it's developed a U.S. and "allied" countries supply chain, and its designs minimize rare-earth-reliant components, which are difficult to source domestically. In 2025, founders David Hansen and Jordan Sanders raised $11 million in seed funding, led by Andreessen Horowitz with backing from Lux Capital, Menlo Ventures, and Founders Fund. The company says it has a full order book and plans to scale production to an annual 30 million units by 2030.

Robots for practical business use

"There are a lot of cool technical projects that make great demos," says Mawhinney, "but they're not a business." It's a sentiment echoed by Ryan Gembala, founder and managing partner of Pathbreaker Ventures: "It's rare to find a team that has both the technical and design capabilities and the ability to identify high-value, compelling business needs." (Gembala is also an investor in Westmag, mentioned above.) That combination is often enough to convince a customer to at least give a pilot a shot, he says. If it goes well, the real-world case studies and data are invaluable sales tools.

Broad acceptance of robots also depends on demonstrating that they are able to safely and reliably navigate the unpredictable real world. Although robots have been working in warehouses and factories for decades, they've operated under highly controlled circumstances, often in a cage. "There are still a lot of safety concerns when it comes to [robots] working alongside humans," says Fung. These startups are leading the way.

3. Nimble Robotics

San Francisco-based Nimble Robotics initially had no marketing or dedicated sales reps when founder Simon Kalouche debuted its system of advanced warehouse robotics for picking and packing a variety of merchandise. It grew by compiling data from its first e-commerce customers. “And then they used those case studies to sell to the next customer and the next customer and the next customer,” says Mawhinney, who advises the company. This customer chain culminated at FedEx, which is using Nimble’s tech in its fulfillment services. Nimble is valued at $1 billion, with its last funding round raising $106 million led by FedEx. It says its 2025 revenue tripled year-over-year, and its number of employees grew by 50 percent, to 250.

4. Simbe

UL Solutions, better known by its original name Underwriters Laboratories, has been certifying appliances since 1894. In March, it granted its first-ever safety certificate to an autonomous robot designed for a public environment. The recipient was “Tally,” a shelf-scanning robot used by many national food retailers including BJ’s Wholesale Club, Albertsons, and Harmons. “Tally” is the flagship product of Simbe, a 100-employee company based in Burlingame, California. Simbe raised $78 million in two rounds in just over a year. Investors include Goldman Sachs, Eclipse and Pathbreaker.

Gembala says he invested early in Simbe in part because co-founders Brad Bogolea, Mirza Shah and Jeff Gee were very focused on HRI, or human robot interaction. “The reason we don’t have robotics

everywhere now isn't necessarily just a technical problem," says Gembala. "It's people adjusting to the future."

Perhaps thanks to sci-fi, people expressed more nervousness than excitement about encountering robots in most aspects of daily life, including self-driving cars, customer service, health care, and the home, according to a national study by Pittsburgh Robotics Network. (An exception was home delivery via drone.)

"So many of the design decisions—the soft edges, and the beeps and boops and the lights that simulate eyes, those details matter a whole lot. Not just does the robot work, but how do people feel when they're around it?" Unsurprisingly, Simbe's own market research suggests that the vibe around Tally is positive, but social media offers some backup: Kids are asking for Tally-themed birthday parties.

Training data for robots

Just as Large Language Models train on the entire corpus of human writing, or something close to it, physical AI trains on vast amounts of detailed data about how things move and behave in the world. "Training data is kind of the oil for physical AI," says Fung. "Data is what helps [a robot] to spin up a new task easily with low friction.

This could take the form of internet videos, simulation, or tele-operation, where a human directs the robot while it initially performs a task. It also includes how a robot learns as it moves around in the world. All of this data is less available than text.

5. SkildAI

Pittsburgh-based Skild AI has made training data issue its main focus. Founders Abhinav Gupta and Deepak Pathak aim to create an AI model (or "brain") that works with any robot form—a disembodied arm, a quadruped, a humanoid. The end result would be "an LLM or an OpenAI or an Anthropic for the robotics world," explains Mawhinney.

Skild has been particularly focused on gathering data from real-world usage, in warehouses, construction sites, data centers and so on. This is also generating revenue, which went from zero to $30 million in 2025. Investors clearly have expectations of much more to come. The company was valued at $14 billion, after a $1.4 billion Series C in January 2026, led by SoftBank, and including NVentures (Nvidia's venture capital arm), Macquarie Group, and Bezos Expeditions.

Robotic dexterity

How much force do you apply to an object to hold and use it safely? It's not something adult humans generally think about, but robots struggle with this basic task: "One of the biggest challenges in robotics today is dexterous manipulation," says Fung. A robot that can't adjust its grip for different or unfamiliar objects is limited, and so is its market. "Many companies just can't afford to spin up a dedicated robot that can only do one thing," says Fung. This is also of particular interest to manufacturers because many assembly line tasks require fine motor skills that are too varied to be automated.

6. Tacta Systems

Tacta Systems, a Palo Alto-based company in Woven's portfolio, focuses on what it calls "dexterous intelligence." Few details have been made public, but founders Andreas Bibl, Nahid Harjee, Vikram Pavate hold several patents that provide clues. A human operator wears gloves embedded with ultrafine sensors to train various forms of robotic "hand" forms, such as a pinch gripper, or the more familiar five-fingered variety. Per the patent, these sensors are able to discern separate objects as well as human fingertips, or better.

Since Woven's investment comes with access to Toyota's factories, Tacta should have plenty of opportunity to put its tech to the real-world test. In addition to Woven, Tacta's investors include B Capital, EDBI, Sojitz Corporation, CDIB-TEN Capital,and Yazaki Innovations. Tacta raised $75 million in total funding, including a $64 million Series A plus an $11 million seed round in June 2025. Matter Venture Partners led the seed, while America's Frontier Fund and SBVA led the Series A.

7. Machina Labs

Los Angeles-based Machina Labs, another company in Woven's portfolio, has developed robots that accurately shape, weld, form and otherwise manipulate sheet metal and other materials. Founders Edward Mehr and Babak Raeisinia call these "RoboCraftsman," which can adjust on the fly to account for different materials, create variations in parts, and apply custom decorative finishes and so on, says Fung. By comparison, without an expensive tooling change, traditional metal stamping can only churn out the same part repeatedly.

The U.S. Air Force and Lockheed Martin are customers, while Lockheed's VC arm is also an investor, along with Balerion Space Ventures, and Strategic Development Fund (SDF). Machina closed on its $124 million Series C in February 2026, much of which is earmarked for a new 200,000 square foot U.S.-based production facility.

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